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DEPT FOR WHA/CAR - Jackie Rosholt

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [NS](#)

SUBJECT: STRIKE IMMINENT AT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN SURINAME?

¶1. (U) Union officials, representing airport workers, have threatened to force the suspension of all flight operations at the Johan Adolf Pengel International Airport (also know as Zanderij Airport) if the Government of Suriname (GOS) does not meet the demands of the workers' union by midnight tonight, September 7. Fire, security, and other airport personnel staged an unofficial strike on September 6, protesting that they do not have a new collective bargaining agreement. The union, headed by Lloyd Read, is demanding a thirteen percent salary increase, a decision from the GOS regarding the title to the land the airport is built on, and proposals for new airport tax tariffs.

¶2. (U) When President Venetiaan was asked to comment on the strike during a press conference this morning, September 7, he waved away journalists' concerns. Minister Richel Apinsa of Transport, Communication, and Tourism also seemed confident that the matter would be resolved before the midnight ultimatum.

¶3. (U) COMMENT: Even though the President of the Union, Lloyd Read, said that "the union is prepared to strike for a long time," there are doubts if there will be a strike at all. Union leader Read and Director of Airport Management Alexander Imanuel are former colleagues from another union at the national oil company, and are likely working together to pressure the government on the land title issue. Imanuel says banks are unwilling to give loans to Airport Management (the semi-autonomous airport authority under the Ministry of Transport, Communication, and Tourism) as long as the issue regarding ownership of the land has not been resolved; Airport Management needs these loans for further investments in infrastructure and security at the airport. Hence, Read's proposed strike is more likely directed at the government than at Airport Management--and at the public, as an awareness raising tool. If Read actually goes through with the strike, it hurts Imanuel--and would anger the public, who are aware of air traffic's importance in Suriname's international reputation. Hence, the strike threat, a common ploy in Suriname, is likely a bluff. END COMMENT

Genton